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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**WOMAN SENTENCED TO THREE YEARS FOR
CALIFORNIA TO TERRE HAUTE METH CONSPIRACY**

PRESS RELEASE

Susan W. Brooks, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana, announced that PAULA HOOPINGARNER, 23, Terre Haute, Indiana, was sentenced to 37 months imprisonment today by U.S. District Judge Larry J. McKinney following her guilty plea to conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine.

The charges in this case arose out of a joint investigation conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration, Indianapolis Police Department's Airport Drug Task Force (IADTF), and the Vigo County Drug Task Force.

During the course of this investigation, law enforcement officers learned of a drug trafficking organization that consisted of residents of Terre Haute. Members of the

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organization would travel by airplane from Indianapolis to the Los Angeles, California area and obtain large amounts of methamphetamine. The methamphetamine would then be transported back to Indiana and ultimately redistributed in Terre Haute.

In November of 2000, law enforcement agents from the IADTF arrested four members of the organization who had traveled from Indianapolis to Los Angeles and attempted to bring large amounts of methamphetamine back to Indiana. During the arrests, IADTF seized nearly one kilogram of methamphetamine from members of the organization.

Further investigation revealed that, beginning in February of 1999, between two and six members of the organization would conceal large sums of U.S. currency on their person and take a flight from Indianapolis to Los Angeles. Once in Los Angeles, large amounts of methamphetamine were obtained from Richard Murillo, a Los Angeles resident. After getting methamphetamine from Murillo, members of the organization would conceal the drugs on their bodies and "body carry" it back on a return flight to Indiana.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Barry D. Glickman, who prosecuted the case for the government, Chief Judge McKinney imposed three years supervised release following HOOPINGARNER'S imprisonment.

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